With just over two weeks to go before the Aboriginal AllStars v Carlton clash, the newly reconstructed Marrara Oval was handed over to the AFL NT by Sports Minister John Ah Kit today.

"This is a great day for footy – but also a great day for the future of sport. The Northern Territory now has a playing surface of international standard open to use by the Arafura Games as well as test and one day cricket.

"Of course there were a few knockers on the way, but the proof is here today and it is with great pleasure we can start the countdown to the 8 February match," Mr Ah Kit said.

Today’s informal ceremony was attended by AFL NT officials, CEO Chris Natt and President Bob Elix.

"Tickets for the Aboriginal All Stars v Carlton game are selling strongly. The quality of the oval as well as the calibre of the teams will give us a memorable match worthy of the quality of this reconstructed facility," Mr Ah Kit said.

The $1.3 million reconstruction of Marrara was necessary after the cancellation of national AFL matches scheduled last year after national officials ruled the ground unsafe for top level football. The reconstruction is part of an overall $2.5 million upgrade of Marrara which will include practice wickets and drop-in wicket storage areas, revamped dressing rooms, ablutions, viewing areas, umpires rooms as well as improved event management, print media, public address and corporate boxes, a score board and broadcast centre. Most of these facilities will be completed before the Territory’s first international cricket test match on 17-21 July between Australia and Bangladesh.

Work on the playing surface was approved this week by the project managers, the Department of Infrastructure Planning and Environment who have handed Marrara back to the facility manager, the Office of Sport and Recreation. Final work on ground marking will be carried out in time for the 8 February match.

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